

Sometimes you've got to bring the Parks to the people.

Tammy Bookbinder was blessed with an early passion for preservation of land and its beauty while attending a Native American summer school. A high school environmental studies course based in a National Park rekindled that passion. "I got a glimpse of a dream I wanted for my own," says Tammy. Later, she was selected for the National Park Service Intern program and assigned to map invasive plants and restore rare, native species on Milagra Ridge in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. She soon became a Milagra/Skyridge Ranger and her dream took full flight: transforming communities by bringing them together to appreciate, restore, and protect the natural landscape of their areas. "I hope that dedicating my life to this work will one day unite communities in the common goal of both taking and giving back to the ecosystem that is ultimately our lifeline," says Tammy. "From my experience with the National Park Service Internship Program, I see that it takes more than one or even a few people to make a difference in a community." Sometimes, it takes a National Park program.



TRANSFORMING

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

MAKING PARKS VALUABLE TO COMMUNITIES, AND COMMUNITIES VALUABLE TO PARKS

Tammy's story reveals a glimpse of the enormous potential for National Parks and American communities to transform each other. **And never before have Parks and American communities needed each other so much.** In the ever-uncertain time in which we live, shared National Park experiences can work wonders. Parks like the USS Arizona Memorial at Pearl Harbor can heal by celebrating the richness and resiliency of our society and our common fate. As families across the nation strive to instill common values, Parks like Independence National Historic Site can strengthen them. As communities - minorities and new immigrants in particular - carve out their place in the American legacy, Parks like the Statue of Liberty National Monument and Ellis Island can help them find it.

Community Engagement programs put the values, knowledge, wisdom, and personal connections experienced through National Parks to work for America's communities. They reach out beyond Park borders to find out how Parks can best serve a community's needs, health, and aspirations. They create more welcoming and more relevant experiences inside Parks for a greater diversity of audiences. Through Community Engagement programs, the Parks show us what we, as Americans, **own together**. Wherever we live and wherever we come from, when individuals and communities embrace that sense of ownership, they care deeply and actively - about their neighbors, about other communities, about their country . . . about their Parks.

In order to more actively engage communities with Parks and vice versa, we need to fund programs that:

- Open new avenues to bring Park rangers and volunteers into communities.
- Work with our partners to create opportunities for new and underserved audiences to visit National Parks.
- Collaborate with schools, libraries and other local institutions to find out what would make the Parks meaningful to the people in their communities and then deliver it.
- Increase and improve our ability to reach new and underserved audiences by coordinating resources, expertise, and innovation from the private, non-profit, and government sectors.

NPF AT WORK: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT GRANT PROGRAMS

While it's hard to think of a single National Park program that doesn't have the mission of community engagement at its heart, to date no single program focuses on it exclusively . . . The **Martin Luther King, Jr., National Historic Site's Children of Courage Discovery Center** documents and interprets the significant role children played in the Civil Rights movement. Multi-media exhibits were created working with local junior high-school teachers and intended primarily for 4th-8th graders, but they have inspired visitors of all ages. The Park hopes the Discovery Center will motivate people to support civil and human rights, as well as to seek out other community sites related to the Civil Rights Movement . . . The **"Nature Rolls, Yosemite Rocks" Mobile Discovery Center** in Yosemite National Park takes science education on the road. Center Interpreters meet with urban and ethnically diverse elementary students throughout California's Central Valley. Using materials and innovative activities they show students what it's like to experience nature in the wild and why they should care about protecting Yosemite's unique natural resources.

"Doing native habitat restoration with my students is an opportunity [for them] to be in touch with the community."

- Teacher, Lincoln High School, San Francisco